

Testimony submitted to the Education Committee
February 28, 2019

Written testimony In Opposition to the Governor's Bill - HB 7150

To members of the Education Committee:

As a resident of Ridgefield, CT, I oppose elements of the Governor's proposed budget, Bill HB 7150 especially the portion concerning funding for teacher's pension.

I have seen an estimate that the impact in year 1 will be \$458,602 for Ridgefield. And \$947,057 for year 2.

Let me help you understand how this will adversely impact education in Ridgefield.

The state has already imposed a cap on the yearly increase in our education budget at 2.5%. Our total BOE budget is \$95 million appropriation. In rough terms, \$458,602 represents about .5% of our budget, in effect limiting our increase to 2.0%

Here are adverse effects of a 2.0% limited increase on our local education, or having to find \$458,602 to cut out of the 2019-20 BOE budget that was already developed and adopted by the BOE.

- We just negotiated a 3 year teacher contract where wages alone increase almost 3% each year and our benefit increase is even higher. Salary and benefits account for 80% of our budget. In our proposed budget increase for 2019-20 the certified salary increase is 1.4%, non-certified salaries is 4.04% and employee benefits is a 6.2% increase. We will have to lay off additional staff beyond the reductions we have already made.
- We are contractually obligated to transportation, energy and special education costs (which are rising). The funding will have to come from somewhere else which is already lean having been restricted by the 2.5% cap in the past few years.
- \$458,602 reduction could translate to:
 - Reducing an entire teaching team at our middle school – because of enrollment numbers we can't do this, though, without having core classes in excess of 40 students in middle school
 - Not making necessary repairs and maintenance in our buildings. We are already seeing the effects of deferred maintenance from where we've had to decrease the requested budget line to fund other contractual obligations. We're at the point where the fix is more costly than if we'd been able to keep up with it.
 - Erasing 40% of our athletics budget – cutting the freshman athletics program and then other sports potentially
 - Wiping out our entire curriculum budget for 2018-19 – which includes curriculum development and professional development. Not only would we not

want to do this but we legally can't do this because there is a minimum amount of professional development we're obligated to provide to our teachers.

- Cancelling all of our hardware leases for all technical hardware/ computers in the district (roughly equivalent to the \$458k)
- The list goes on

While these may not seem like big things in the overall scheme of the budget, when you look from the lens of the teachers and students in the Ridgefield Public School district instead of a spreadsheet, the effects of this proposed legislation are devastating to student achievement in Ridgefield.

Respectfully,

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